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MLGPA News (December 1996)

Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance

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MLGPA News

Fighting for Fairness Since 1984

P.O. Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347

December 1996

ML/GPA Elects New Slate of Board Members

Eleven of sixteen Board members were newly elected at the ML/GPA annual meeting in September. President of ML/GPA for three years, Karen Geraghty has stepped down from the president's post, but will continue to maintain an active political life.

Newly elected president Betsy Smith, and vice-president Del Wilson are eager to continue ML/GPA's political and educational work, which has characterized the organization over the last several years. ML/GPA has been instrumental in advocating for a state-wide civil rights bill, which in 1997 has its best chance ever of getting signed into law. ML/GPA was also one of the founding members of Maine Won't Discriminate, the state-wide coalition which helped to defeat Question 1 in 1995.

Betsy has been an active member in ML/GPA since 1994, and was elected to the Board in 1995. During the campaign on referendum Question 1, Betsy served as co-chair of the Cumberland County MWD Chapter. Prior to moving back to Maine, she served as vice-president of the Ft. Collins (Colorado) Gay and Lesbian Alliance. Currently she is a mathematics teacher at Waynflete School in Portland.

Del was elected to the Board in 1994 and took over treasury responsibilities in the midst of his first year. During the campaign on referendum Question 1, Del served as state-wide County Fundraiser and Volunteer Coordinator. Prior to MWD, he was active in ACT-UP and Equal Protection Portland. Currently Del

works as the Manager of Summer Programs and Secretary to the Commission on Residential Life at Bowdoin College.

The Board also consists of newly elected treasurer David Rappoport. David recently moved to Maine from Philadelphia to be with his partner. David comes to us with a wealth of experience in non-profit management. Long-time ML/GPA Board member Dan Stevens is taking over the responsibilities of recording secretary. Dan has served as president and vice-president of ML/GPA and has played very important roles in the legislative and fundraising efforts of the organization. Lauraine Bernier will continue her post as membership secretary. Lauraine is responsible for maintaining the state-wide mailing and membership lists.

Celeste Gosselin, long-time ML/GPA Board member, and Kate McLaughlin, newly elected with three recent campaigns under her belt, will both serve on the Executive and Legislative Committees.

Returning to the Board in various capacities are Diane Campbell, Oakland; Brian Kaufman, Gardiner; and Deb Mears, Wilton. New to the Board are Harold Booth, Hallowell; Eben Chadwick, Portland; Michael Rossetti, Portland; Jim Schneider, Farmingdale; Susan Sparaco, Bath; and Mark Sullivan, Hallowell.

Congratulations, ML/GPA Board members. Best of luck for a successful legislative session and more!

Congratulations from the Gay Community

We have among us several newly elected house and senate members who are not only progressive, but are gay or lesbian as well. The tally is not in yet, but we can celebrate our success in electing at least four gay or lesbian house and/or senate members. Our numbers in the state legislature are growing, and with that comes the blessing of fair representation.

Several candidates for the Maine state legislature received national attention in the December 10 issue

**Don't Miss
the ML/GPA 12th Annual
Awards Banquet**

Saturday, February 8, 1997

See page 4 for nominating information.

of *The Advocate*. Indicating that the candidates had turned down money from the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund (a Washington DC-based political group that funnels money to gay candidates), *The Advocate* was nevertheless thrilled to report that they had won anyway. (Apparently no money was ever offered.)

Our congratulations to all the progressive legislators elected to the Maine Legislature. We hope you will make the 118th Legislature historic for taking one giant step in attaining equal rights.

A word from the president...

Another exciting campaign season is behind us, and we are thrilled by the number of ML/GPA endorsed candidates who won election to the State House and Senate (25 of 29 in the Senate, 53 of 81 in the House). We were honored to endorse so many outstanding individuals who support a state-wide anti-discrimination bill. Hopes are high for the 118th Maine Legislature to attain equal rights for all Maine's citizens.

As we all settle in to do what it is we were elected to do, I wish to recognize one very important individual. Outgoing ML/GPA president Karen Geraghty has battled diligently for equal rights for over fifteen years, three years as president of ML/GPA.

Under Karen's leadership, ML/GPA diversified its mission and tasks. Her work with minorities resulted in the creation of the Minority Coalition of Maine. Among her accomplishments with hate crimes, she helped establish Portland's Bias Crime Task Force. Her work in combating violence in schools led her to be the major support behind the youth-driven Safer Schools Coalition, a coalition striving to create a Governor's Commission on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Youth. Her tireless effort to attain equal justice for all individuals was rewarded this past fall when she was honored by the Equity Institute of Maine in receiving their prestigious Leadership Award.

Today Karen passes the torch to a group of energetic and dedicated individuals. The new Board wishes to recognize and thank Karen for the leadership she has shown over the past three years.

As the new president, I encourage all of you to become involved in the g/l/b/t movement. Make your voice heard, whether through ML/GPA or other organizations striving for equality: the Speakout Project, GLSTN, PFLAG, Freedom to Marry Roundtable, Maine Women's Lobby, Matlovich, MCLU, OUT-RIGHT, and others.

ML/GPA holds its monthly meeting the third Thursday of the month, from 6-9pm, at the Maine Education Association in Augusta. Two or three

meetings a year are held Saturdays (dates to be determined), from 12-3pm. For more information, please call us: 1-800-55-MLGPA or, in Greater Portland, 761-3732.

In Solidarity,
Betsy Smith

Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration

Each year the NAACP sponsors a celebration breakfast on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Proceeds from the breakfast help support the NAACP's programs.

ML/GPA has supported the NAACP for years by purchasing several tickets and encouraging people to attend the breakfast. The breakfast this year will be held on Monday, January 20, 1997, at 8:00am at the Holiday Inn By The Bay in Portland. Tickets are \$10.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children. If you are interested in attending, please call ML/GPA at 1-800-55-MLGPA (or 761-3732 in Greater Portland).

Decline to Sign Update

Although Carolyn Cosby's entourage collected the required number of signatures for her anti-gay petition on Election Day, they did not do it without protest. The loyal troops of DECLINE TO SIGN were out in force, educating and debating wherever they could. DTS volunteers topped about 100 on Election Day, scattered across the state. It is a challenging task to prevent signature collection in the state of Maine, because signature collectors may be inside at a table, and counter petitioners (us, in this case!) have to be 250 feet away from the polling place. Anyone interested in starting a petition to change the "250 feet" law??!

*Have you remembered to send in
your membership dues?
If not, please do so today.
With your generous help
we can continue important work
in and for our community!*

Thanks!

Direction and Strategy for the 1997 Legislative Session

The 118th Legislature (1997-98) brings with it the best chance ever of passing a state-wide non-discrimination bill based on sexual orientation. A large number of pro-gay candidates were elected to both the House and Senate during this recent election, and we have a governor who has promised to sign the legislation should it cross his desk.

We feel there is significant support in the Senate for a non-discrimination bill, but feel less encouraged by the support in the House. Plenty of educating and lobbying will be necessary for the House to render a majority of votes for passage of a bill. ML/GPA plans to be at the forefront of the lobbying effort.

Though the horizon seems bright on that front, we will unfortunately be faced with at least one piece of anti-gay legislation. Carolyn Cosby has submitted 60,000 citizen signatures on a petition to ban gay marriage in Maine. Cosby's initiative will be voted on by the 118th Legislature; they will either enact it themselves or send it to the people for a vote. Enacting it themselves will result in a ban on gay marriage before we even have a chance to educate voters on the issue. Sending it to the people will result in another exhausting and costly referendum campaign.

At the moment, we would like to hear your ideas of how ML/GPA should proceed in the next several months. Please contact us with your ideas. And please join us at the legislative committee meetings so your voice can be heard.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS for LEGISLATIVE INPUT:

- ▼ ML/GPA, PO Box 232, Hallowell, ME 04347
1-800-55-MLGPA (or in Greater Portland,
761-3732)
- ▼ Tom Coffin, Legislative Liaison, e-mail to:
tcoffinme@juno.com

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

- ▼ For information on time and location of meetings, call 1-800-55-MLGPA (or 761-3732 in Greater Portland). Everyone is welcome!

A Note about ENDA/DOMA

As most of you know, the vote on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) took place on Tuesday, September 10, 1996. The U.S. Senate voted 85-14 for DOMA and 50-49 against ENDA, continuing to make it legal in 41 states to discriminate against someone in the workplace because of sexual orientation.

However, to have lobbied the Republican-controlled Senate to nearly pass ENDA was truly historic. Thanks to the hard work of many individuals and the Human Rights Campaign, a whopping 49 votes from both sides of the aisle were generated for ENDA—with approximately ten senators being persuaded to vote in favor of ENDA within the last few days before the vote.

Maine Senators Olympia Snowe and Bill Cohen were among the senators who voted for ENDA. Though they also voted to enact DOMA, they saw the importance and necessity of a federal law banning discrimination in the workplace. Senators Snowe and Cohen should be thanked for their position on ENDA. Following is a sample letter produced by the Human Rights Campaign. We encourage you to take a moment and write to Snowe and Cohen at:

Sen. William S. Cohen	Sen. Olympia J. Snowe
322 Hart Sen. Off. Bldg.	495 Russell Sen. Off. Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510	Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator _____:

I am writing to thank you for your recent historic vote for the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. I commend you for voting to pass this civil rights bill.

The ENDA vote was an historic first step for equal rights in the workplace. The fact that you stood on the side of fairness from the beginning will not be forgotten.

I am not, however, pleased with your vote on the Defense of Marriage Act. DOMA interferes with a state's authority on marriage, is widely regarded as unconstitutional and attacks an issue not currently legal in any state. Indeed, most states have chosen not to pass legislation at this time.

Again, thank you for doing the right thing with regard to ENDA, but Congress should attend to the real business of the country and stop attacking one group of American citizens who only want equal treatment, not special treatment, under the law.

Sincerely,

Events/Meetings/Etc.

ALL MAINE TRANSGENDER

Group support for all Crossdressers, Transvestites,
Transgenders, Transsexuals
Gay—Lesbian—Bi—Straight
Confidential—Discreet Bangor Meeting Place

Write to: AMT
PO Box 145
Brewer, ME 04412
Or call: 947-1686

ALL OF OUR VOICES RISING

A day-long retreat to affirm and celebrate families with gay, lesbian and bisexual members. Laugh and love and weep with us over the unique blessings and struggles of walking this path together. With Erik Mercer, MSW, Sarah Jordan, BA, Ellie Mercer, MDiv, and Meredith Jordan, MA. Saturday, February 15, 1997, 10am–4pm. Call 284-1034 for location, information and registration.

DEEPENING IN THE SPIRIT: FOR GAY & LESBIAN PARTNERS

A 2-day retreat for gay and lesbian partners who wish to affirm their commitment to Spirit and to each other, who want to explore the strengths of their relationships in a safe and supportive gathering, and who want to build on the qualities that make healthy, strong, same-sex partnerships. With Marvin Ellison, PhD, Meredith Jordan, MA, and Ellie Mercer, MDiv. June 27 and 28, 1997, 10am–4pm each day. Call 284-1034 for location, information and registration.

ML/GPA

12th Annual Awards Banquet

The 12th Annual Awards Banquet will be held Saturday, February 8, 1997, at the Augusta Civic Center. Plans are in the making for a very special banquet this year. Please mark the date on your calendar.

Each year at the banquet, ML/GPA honors certain individuals and/or groups for their effort in the struggle for equality. We need and value your input as to who should be honored this year. Please take a moment to think about the individuals who are making a difference. We ask that you nominate the individual(s) you feel deserve to be recognized.

Nominating is done via a nomination form. Please call ML/GPA at 1-800-55-MLGPA to request a nomination form. If you get an answering machine, please leave your name, address and phone number and state that you are requesting an award nomination form.

Thank You.

**ML/GPA: 1-800-55-MLGPA
(or 761-3732 in Greater Portland)**

*If you have any social, educational
or political events in your area
and would like a hand organizing,
please call us!
We can help!*

